

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 RSR-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 /115 W

----- 109451

R 311455Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9224

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSUL CALI UNN

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 7203

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

1. SUMMARY. THE MOMENTUM OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IS ALREADY BUILDING DESPITE THE FACT ALMOST EIGHT MONTHS REMAIN UNTIL THE ELECTIONS. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE, THE CONSERVATIVE PRECANDIDATE IS CONCENTRATING ON STRENGTHENING LOCAL ORGS AND GEN ROJAS HAS PROCLAIMED HIS DAUGHTER AS THE ANAPO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. ALL THE CANDIDATES HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THEIR ORGS AND THE ANAPO IS IN ESPECIALLY BAD SHAPE. THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISCUSSION OF ISSUES BUT NO REAL CONFRONTATIONS. IN FACT, THE CANDIDATES COINCIDE IN THEIR VIEWS ON A NUMBER OF THEMES. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBERAL PARTY - THE SURPRISE NOMINATION AT THE END OF JUNE OF ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN AS THE LIBERAL PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HAS PRECIPITATED INTENSE POLIT ACTIVITY MUCH EARLIER THAN IS THE CASE IN COLOMBIAN ELECTIONS. IF ALL HAD GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN, THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN NOMINATED UNTIL DEC. FACED WITH THE CHOICE OF POSSIBLY BURNING HIMSELF OUT BY ELECTION
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TIME NEXT APRIL, OR WAITING AND PERHAPS NOT CONSOLIDATING HIS NEWLY WON LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY, LOPEZ DECIDED TO STUMP THE COUNTRY AND GENERATE ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE PARTY FAITHFUL. HE HAS NOT DIRECTED HIS FIRE SO MUCH AT THE CONSERVATIVE AND ANAPO CANDIDATES

AS HE HAS THE GOVT, WHICH HE ACCUSES, BY IMPLICATION AT LEAST, OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE NATION'S ILLS.

3. LOPEZ IS HAMPERED IN HIS EFFORTS TOMOBILIZE THE RANK AND FILE BY CONTINUED SMOLDERING RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF CARLOS LLERAS' ADHERENTS. NOR HAS LOPEZ HELPED MATTERS IN THIS RESPECT; ALMOST ALL OF THE TOP NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTY POSITIONS HAVE GONE TO LOPISTAS AND FOLLOWERS OF JULIO CESAR TURBAY, LIBERAL PARTY DIRECTOR. IN FACT, A CLOSE ANALYSIS OF THE ORIENTATION OF LEADERS SHOWS THAT TURBAY HAS MORE OF HIS PEOPLE IN KEY JOBS THAN HAS LOPEZ. TURBAY IS TRAVELING EVERYWHERE WITH LOPEZ AND WHILE THE CANDIDATE IS MAKING SPEECHES TURBAY IS PUTTING TOGETHER LOCAL ORGS. MANY OBSERVERS SUSPECT THAT TURBAY WANTS TO MAKE HIS OWN RACE IN 78 AND THAT HE IS ALSO SHOOTING FOR THE JOB OF DESIGNADO (VICE PRES) UNDER LOPEZ.

4. SERIOUS PROBLEMS HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE LIBERAL PARTY AS DIFFERENT FACTIONS JOCKEY FOR POSITION ON ELECTORAL LISTS FOR THE SENATE, THE CHAMBER OF REPS AND LOCAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES. THE PROBABLE RESULT WILL BE TWO OR THREE LISTS IN A NUMBER OF ELECTORAL DISTRICTS. INTENSE COMPETITION AMONG THE FACTIONS MAY WELL SWELL THE PARTY VOTE, BUT THE INTRA-PARTY DIVISIONS BODE ILL FOR LIBERAL DISCIPLINE IN THE 74 CONGRESS.

5. CONSERVATIVE PARTY - ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A TRIP TO ISRAEL AND HAS IMMEDIATELY TAKEN UP HIS ACTIVE CAMPAIGN TO CONSTRUCT A SOLID GRASS ROOTS ORG. THE CONSERVATIVE CONVENTION WILL NOMINATE THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE IN SEPT, BUT ALL EXCEPT A FEW POCKETS OF OPPOSITION HAVE FOLDED AND HE IS IN FACT THE CANDIDATE. GOMEZ HAS BEEN BUILDING HIS POLIT MACHINE FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND AT THIS POINT IN TIME HAS A SMOOTH RUNNING, WELL FINANCED ORG THAT USES SOME OF THE TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN U S ELECTIONS. GOMEZ BELIEVES THE CANDIDACY OF MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO FOR ANAPO HAS HELPED HIM IN THAT MOST REMAINING ANAPO MEMBERS ARE FORMER CONSERVATIVES WHO WOULD HAVE VOTED FOR THE GENERAL BECAUSE THEY LOOK UPON ROJAS AS A REAL CONSERVATIVE, BUT VIEW THE DAUGHTER WITH SUSPICION BECAUSE OF HER ASSOCIATION WITH LIBERALS
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AND HER EFFORTS TO PRESENT A POPULIST IMAGE. NOW THAT MARIA EUGENIA IS THE CANDIDATE, GOMEZ PLANS TO INTENSIFY HIS EFFORTS TO WIN BACK TO CONSERVATISM ANAPO'S LOCAL LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE RETIRED MIL MEN.

6. GOMEZ' MAJOR PROBLEM IS WITH BERTHA DE OSPINA, WIFE OF THE EX-PRES. DONA BERTHA HAS TAKEN OVER THE NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE DIRECTORATE AND IS CREATING ILL WILL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY; SHE HAS GIVEN SHORT SHRIFT TO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES IN THE COMPOSITION OF ELECTORAL LISTS AND SELECTION OF PARTY OFFICIALS AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS. SHE IS FOND OF SAYING "THE FIRST SHALL BE FIRST AND THE REST WILL HAVE TO GET IN LINE." NEITHER GOMEZ NOR ANYONE DARES CROSS HER BECAUSE OF HER HUSBAND'S

PRESTIGE AND HER PROPENSITY TO TONGUE LASH VERBALLY OR IN PRINT THOSE WHO IRK HER. THE PROGRESSIVES ARE RECONCILED TO GOMEZ' NOMINATION, BUT THEY ARE NOT GOING TO GIVE HIM THE SUPPORT HE NEEDS IF THEY ARE GIVEN FEW JOBS AND POOR POSITION ON THE ELECTORAL LISTS. AS IS THE CASE WITH THE LIBERALS, THE PROGRESSIVES MAY LAUNCH SEPARATE LISTS.

7. ANAPO - IMMEDIATELY AFTER HER PROCLAMATION AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BY HER FATHER ON AUG 25, MARIA EUGENIA MADE PLANS FOR TRIPS TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF COLOMBIA TO REORGANIZE AND REVITALIZE THE PARTY MACHINERY. MEMBERS OF THE ANAPO HIGH COMMAND HAVE TOLD US THAT LOCAL STRUCTURES ARE IN A SHAMBLES. ONCE MARIA EUGENIA GETS OUT AND AROUND SOME OF THE DAMAGE CAN BE REPAIRED, BUT ANAPO IS GOING TO HAVE TO HOPE FOR TRAUMATIC EVENTS THAT WILL CHANNEL A LARGE MALCONTENT VOTE ITS WAY (A DISASTROUS INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING, FOR EXAMPLE). EVEN THEN, LOPEZ WOULD GARNER MANY OF THESE VOTES BECAUSE OF HIS OWN STANCE. IN ANY EVENT, THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THE ECONOMY AND POLIT INSTITUTIONS WILL BE SO WEAKENED AND DISCREDITED OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS AS TO CAUSE A MASSIVE TURN TO ANAPO.

8. MARIA EUGENIA HAS MADE PLAIN TO US THAT SHE IS NOT THINKING SERIOUSLY AT THIS TIME OF ANY DEALS OF ALLIANCES WITH EITHER THE LIBERALS OR CONSERVATIVES. ONE POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE WITH THE UNION OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION (UNO), A LOOSE COALITION OF LEFTIST ELEMENTS. UNO PLANS TO RUN ITS OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AS WELL AS CONGRESSIONAL LISTS, BUT THE RECORD OF THE LEFT IN COLOMBIA IS ONE OF UTTER FAILURE AND IF IT IS TO MAKE ANY CONFIDENTIAL

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APPRECIABLE IMPACT IN THE ELECTIONS IT WILL HAVE TO WORK THROUGH ANAPO.

9. THE ISSUES HAVE NOT YET BEEN SHARPLY DEFINED. BOTH LOPEZ AND GOMEZ ATTACK GOVT INEFFICIENCY AND OVERCENTRALIZATION. LOPEZ IS HITTING HARD ON THERISING COST OF LIVING, BUT ONCE MARIA EUGENIA GETS ROLLING SHE TOO CAN BE EXPECTED TO HAMMER AWAY AT THIS THEME. GOMEZ SEES COLOMBIAN SOCIETY RETURNING TO A CONSERVATIVE (WITH A SMALL C) STANCE AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF SIDLING LEFTWARD UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CARLOS LLERAS AND HE PLANS TO STAY CLEARLY TO THE RIGHT OF CENTER. HE IS NOT A REACTIONARY, LIBERAL POLEMICS NOTWITHSTANDING, AND HIS PLATFORM CONTAINS A STRONG ADVOCACY OF DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE. LOPEZ IS HARD AT WORK PROJECTING A LEFTIST IMAGE AND AT THE SAME TIME ASSURING MONEYED AND LANDED INTERESTS THAT THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM HIM. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A SERIES OF VAGUE PRONOUNCEMENTS THAT HAVE FAILED TO AROUSE A GREAT DEAL OF EXCITEMENT. ONE THING IS CERTAIN, LOPEZ IS NOW CONSIDERED BY MOST BUSINESS MEN AND LARGE LANDHOLDERS TO BE "SAFE" ON ISSUES OF AGRARIAN REFORM AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

10. IN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES WE SHALL REPORT THE ISSUES IN GREATER DETAIL AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY ARE BEING TREATED BY THE CAN-

DIDATES, WHITE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BOGOTA07203
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqceeeep.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <08 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY
TAGS: PINT, CO
To: STATE INFO USCINCSO
CALI UNN
MEDELLIN UNN
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005